

WANDERERS FORCE DONS TO HANG ON

by Argus

Wimbledon 2, Wycombe W. 1

GRADUALLY and painfully, after all the shakings and shufflings and heart searchings, the Wycombe Wanderers' side of the future is beginning to settle down. Wycombe may have lost to the powerful Dons on Saturday, but they had easily the better of the second half.

As Wycombe coach Sid Cann commented after the game: "It looks as if the experiments we have been forced to make are beginning to pay off."

Consider the contestants. Wimbledon, strengthened by the acquisition of Tooting left-half Ted Murphy, have basically the same experienced side which won the Isthmian championship two seasons ago.

But it was the Wanderers—including two teenagers, four men playing out of their normal positions and a reserve inside-forward—who cut out most of the second-half work and missed a golden chance to equalise when Paul Bates was too slow off the mark.

Chief item on the Wycombe

credit side is the improvement of the defence—far less brittle than a month ago. A major factor is the comparative success of left-winger Dennis Atkins and wing-half Dave Worley, in the full-back positions.

Both were struggling hard at first against speed merchants Eric Adams and Alan Burton, on the Dons' flanks, but both gradually established complete control by fast, diligent marking.

But it was long John Fisher upon whom Surrey attention was firmly riveted. Facing lumbering Wimbledon Goliath Eddie Reynolds, Fisher was always in the thick of events.

Dons fans bayed for a penalty after only ten minutes when the two giants went up for a long centre, and they appealed again, with much more justice, in the 29th minute when Fisher punched the ball out of his own penalty box.

Lack of thrust and aggression was the chief fault of the Wanderers' attack. They scarcely shot in anger before the interval and always looked lightweight and too leisurely. Murphy's tigerish tackling usually kept Lon Worley under control in his unaccustomed inside-right position, while Derek Draffen was as nippy as ever but out of his depth.

The goals? Full back Brian Rudge hit an accurately placed spot-kick past Brown after Fisher had handled in the 29th minute and Dons' inside-right Brian Martin slammed home a great shot three minutes before half-time. After Tomlin had replied in the 47th minute Wycombe pegged away for most of the second half.